

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A packaging and filling apparatus for vertically sealing a web of packaging material in the form of a tube, filling the tube with a fluid product, forming lateral seal bands by sealing the tube in the direction in which the bands intersect the tube, cutting the middle of each lateral seal band of a series of pillow-like preformed bodies with a cutting device such that the pillow-like preformed bodies are severed from each other, thus forming a packaging and filling container of the final form, the packaging and filling apparatus characterized in that:

the cutting device comprises:

a resistance measuring means for measuring ~~[[the]]~~ a cutting resistance that a packaging material cutting blade in the cutting device receives from the packaging material, and then outputting a measurement value obtained; and

a blade monitoring means for monitoring the condition of the packaging material cutting blade based upon the measurement value,

wherein the blade monitoring means monitors the condition of the packaging material cutting blade based upon a comparison of a pressure difference between a maximum resistance pressure obtained from a profile of the measurement value and a constant resistance pressure following the maximum resistance pressure with a predetermined pressure difference reference value.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) A packaging material cutting device for use in a packaging and filling apparatus for vertically sealing a web of packaging material in the form of a tube, filling the tube with a fluid product, forming lateral seal bands by sealing the tube in the direction in which the bands intersect the tube, cutting the middle of each lateral seal band of a series of pillow-like preformed bodies with a cutting device such that the pillow-like preformed bodies are severed from each other, thus forming a packaging and filling container of the final form, the cutting device characterized by comprising: a resistance measuring means for measuring ~~[[the]]~~ a cutting resistance that a packaging material cutting blade in the cutting device receives from the packaging material, and then outputting a measurement value obtained; and

a blade monitoring means for monitoring the condition of packaging material cutting blade based upon the measurement value,

wherein the blade monitoring means monitors the condition of the packaging material cutting blade based upon a comparison of a pressure difference between a maximum resistance pressure obtained from a profile of the measurement value and a constant resistance pressure following the maximum resistance pressure with a predetermined pressure difference reference value.

6. (Canceled)

7. (New) A method of operating a packaging and filling apparatus comprising:

- longitudinally sealing a web of packaging material to form a tube of packaging material;
- filling the tube of packaging material with a fluid product;
- forming spaced apart lateral seals in the tube of packaging material to produce a plurality of interconnected fluid-containing preformed bodies;
- cutting the tube of packaging material at an intermediate region of the lateral seals with a cutting blade to separate the preformed bodies from each other and form individual fluid-containing containers;
- measuring a cutting resistance that the cutting blade receives from the packaging material; and
- replacing the cutting blade based on the measured cutting resistance.

8. (New) The method of operating a packaging and filling apparatus of Claim 7, wherein the cutting blade is replaced based upon a comparison of a difference between a maximum measured cutting resistance and a constant measured cutting resistance following the maximum measured cutting resistance with a predetermined difference reference value.